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AUTHOR Lewis, Alan D.
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ABSTRACT

Twelve functions are briefly described which should be included in planning space for library staff. They are: (1) Administration, (2) Other Supervisory Offices, (3) Work Rooms, (4) Circulation Desk, (5) Reference Desk, (6) Staff Lounge, (7) Custodian Space, (8) Bookmobile Staff, (9) Books by Mail, (10) Interlibrary Loan, (11) Reserve Room, and (12) Data Processing. (AP)

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Estimating Space for Staff

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by

Alan D. Lewis

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A Paper Presented at the American Library Association, Library Administration Division, Buildings and Equipment Section Pre-Conference, "Meeting Library Building Space Needs.

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Estimating Space for Staff

When I first began to prepare this presentation, naturally I started on the obligatory literature search. As I had expected, I found that it would take much more time than I had available to locate, secure and review all the materials which could be of potential benefit.

Those of you who have begun that process know what I mean. However, I can't emphasize enough the value of the information that is available in the literature. For anyone who is going to be involved in a building program, it is extremely important to familiarize yourself with what is available, pick out what looks to you like it would be helpful and spend the time necessary to review it. This will undoubltedly turn out to be some of the most profitable and beneficial time you will spend.

Unfortunately, the literature provides rather uneven coverage of the topic of space needs for staff. Too often, staff space is glossed over without going into many details. I assume that of several possible reasons for this, one of the basic reasons is that making these determinations can be a rather complicated process and there can be many variables. There is a tremendous difference between a small-town public library and a metropolitan city library or large university library as far as staff space needs are concerned. There also seems to be a variety of opinions as to exactly what should be included in the category of staff space. Some authorities may include certain space needs in the staff category while other authorities might include the same space in discussions of various service functions. As far as I am concerned, any way is correct as long as all space needs are covered somewhere. In my remarks, I will try to be somewhat inclusive at the risk of duplicating a little bit of what another speaker may cover. The important thing is that when you plan your building, you don't inadvertently omit space for any necessary functions, staff or other.

It seems to me that one of the mistakes that too many librarians who have gone through building projects and then administered them for a while most often refer to is not making enough allowance for increases in staff size or number of staff. One of the most common mistakes is when the librarian believes he or she can continue to operate a new building which may be several times as large as the old space with the same staff or with a slight increase in numbers. Here is where it is very important that the written Building Program must state what is apt to happen and the planning team must realize what the actual staffing needs will be for the new and/or redesigned areas. I'll go into more detail on some examples of this later. It is really a shame to see areas of newly-opened buildings staffed for a reduced number of hours per day or closed part of the time because no one realized that it would take more man/hours to staff the new facilities. It seems realistic to assume that when the planning is being done that if there are to be new functions, there will probably need to be new staff. The problem occurs more often when existing functions are expanded that the need for expanded staffing levels is not taken into account. This situation can occur in almost any functional responsibility or operational unit.

Although my experience has been limited to public libraries, I believe my remarks have general application to other types of libraries as well. Obviously, there will be little interest to academic librarians in bookmobile service or by public librarians in reserve book rooms but I hope you'll bear with me during my discussion of such points. In my review of space needs for staff, I'm not going to try to tell you how many square feet of space you should allow for each person or function or piece of equipment. I have found that there are a number of standards and formulae in the literature. Some knowledgeable consultants have rather strong feelings about the various formulae so your planning team will probably want to use one particular formula from one particular source, such as the ALA standards, so you would probably be wise to stay pretty much with the same formula and make whatever exceptions you feel would be appropriate.

Therefore, instead of square feet, I'm going to mention 12 functions which I believe should be allowed for in planning. Sincy you represent different types and sizes of libraries, you won't all include each of these functions.

Function No. 1. Administration.

How many people will work in this area? Do you need just one desk or small office for the librarian or do you need a whole suite of offices for administrators, secretaries, accounting staff, personnel, etc.? Will you need a separate board or meeting room for this unit? Will you need a special library collection for the administrative staff?

Function No. 2. Other Supervisory Offices.

Are there other supervisory personnel who need office space? Some examples might be for supervisors of special collections or subject collections, adult service or childrens service, extension service for branches and stations, etc. Where should these offices be located? Are there other functional units in your library which should have office space?

Function No. 3. Work Room(s).

This is a very inclusive term and should be examined closely. For example, if you are a member of a system, how much space do you need to provide for technical services? Will you be doing any processing or will that work be performed some where else? Or will you be doing technical processing for others which might require more space in your building than you might otherwise need? Will you have supervisors, catalogers, order clerks, clerk-typists, etc. and all the storage or working space that each requires? How about pockets, jackets and labels? Do you need space for printing and art work or for mending and binding? Does your library have other functions which will require work room space? Do you perhaps need several work rooms for various functions, keeping in mind equipment, noise levels, traffic flow, and the need to be in proximity to other specific areas? If your building will have more than one floor or level, do work rooms need to be on the main, or ground level?

Function No. 4. Circulation Desk.

How many circulation desks will you need and where should they be located? For example, in a public library, will you need a separate circulation desk for the children's collection? Will you need a special work area or room for handling returns, overdues and other circulation records? What type of circulation system will you be using? Will you need space for equipment for circulation or security systems? Will you need additional staff to handle increased workloads?

Function No. 5. Reference Desk.

Again, how many and where? If you have subject collections, will the reference work in those subject areas be handled there? Or will it be handled at the main reference desk? Can present staffing levels handle the workload? Will it be located conveniently to the tools used such as the card catalog and the reference collection?

Function No. 6. Staff Lounge.

How many people will use it at peak periods such as lunch time and coffee breaks? What type of furniture should it contain? What effects do you intend to achieve by colors and lighting? Should there be lockers for the staff? What equipment such as stoves and refrigerators should be supplied? Should there be staff-only rest rooms connected to the staff lounge or located elsewhere? Or will staff use the public rest rooms?

Function No. 7. Custodian Space.

In addition to supplies and equipment, what other work space is needed here? Are there special functions or tasks which need to be provided for? Perhaps a work bench and storage space for tools should be provided.

Function No. 8. Bookmobile Staff.

If you run bookmobile service out of your library, do you need a special room for these operations? Should it have a locational relationship to Extension or a garage? Do you need to provide space for a special bookmobile materials collection? Also, what types of materials are used on the bookmobiles and do they have special storage needs?

Function No. 9. Books by Mail.

Considering the specialized needs of the operation of a Books by Mail program, should it be located in a separate room or can it be operated out of other work space? If you have a mail room, how should it relate to that operation? What has been the growth trend as far as your books by mail operation is concerned? If it is growing, how many people will be needed to run it next year and the following year?

Function No. 10. Interlibrary Loan.

Has this function grown to the point that special space needs to be provided for it? Can this space be shared with some other functions? Should its relationship to the materials collection take precedence over a consideration for wrapping and mailing or otherwise preparing the materials to go out and for receiving materials? Should the location of a telecommunications device such as teletype or another form of a terminal have a relationship to Interlibrary Loan?

Function No. 11. Reserve Room.

If the reserve function is performed in your library, do you need one or more special rooms or areas to handle this service? Does this service relate more to certain collections or subject areas than others? Should it have a relationship to a main circulation desk or area? What kind of a circulation system does it use?

Function No. 12. Data Processing.

If your library has its own data processing unit, this function will probably have a unique set of requirements which must be addressed by people who are knowledgeable in the field of data processing. Computer rooms, for example, often have raised floors so that necessary wiring and cables can be accommodated; humidity and temperature must be closely regulated. Staff work and office space must be determined by the size of the operation. Location decisions must take into account considerations for future expansion if that should prove necessary.

I believe that these areas or functions that I have mentioned will cover most of the needs of most libraries for staff space. As I said before, probably no single library will need to provide for all of the functions I have mentioned but most libraries will need to give consideration to most of them. Some of you may have other staff space needs which I haven't mentioned. Any library may have a situation or problem which is unique to that library and in that case, the important thing is to realize and understand the situation during the planning phase rather than after you have moved into the new building. I can't emphasize too much how important the written Building Program is to the success of the new building and the need for the planning team to thoroughly analyze and discuss all of these important considerations. If the proper time and effort are expended at those early stages of the game, the pay-off in terms of satisfaction and useability of the building will be many times greater.